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ABSTRACT

Pretend play and language growth are related through representational thought. Fundamental to representational thought are five connectives, at the theoretical level, which link pretend play and language growth: motor actions, roles and role changes, creative expression, concentration, and decentration. At the research level, results of selected studies show not only that pretend play and language growth are associated but also that pretend play in dramatic and sociodramatic forms can assist oral and written communication. Aspects of pretend play crucial to sociodramatic play and growth in language ability are: make-believe with objects, make-believe with situations and actions, imitative role play, and play episodes involving interaction and verbal communication. Based on theory and research, an instructional model has been developed for promoting language growth through sociodramatic play. The model contains observation and language development components. For use with preschool-aged children, the key elements of the observation component are observing children's sociodramatic experiences, interviewing children, and transcribing the interview. Building on completed transcriptions, the language development component for children in primary grades uses children's real language, actual vocabulary, and speech patterns to develop beginning reading skills. (Guidelines for implementing both components of the model are provided.) (RH)

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PRETEND PLAY AND LANGUAGE GROWTH IN YOUNG CHILDREN

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Pretend Play and Language Growth in Young Children

Introduction

The chapter focuses on pretend play and communication and their uses in programs with young children. More specifically, it examines similarities between pretend play and communication and identifies the contributions of pretend play and language growth for research and practical perspectives. Based on connections between pretend play and language growth at theoretical and research levels an instructional model is described using sociodramatic play for development of communication--both oral and written.

Previous considerations of pretend play and language differ from current thinking. Prior to the 1960s, pretend play on one hand was seen largely as compensatory activities that relieved children's tension, and anxiety and pent-up emotions and contributed to healthy ego development (Erikson, 1963; Frank, Hartley & Goldenson, 1954). On the other hand, language was explained as the child's appropriate modeling of language used by the adult. Learning a language rested on the children's making successive approximations of adult's responses (Skinner, 1959). Excellent reviews of previous perspectives of pretend play are found in Ellis (1973) and Neuman (1971); thorough views of language learning are explicated in McNeil (1966), Chomsky (1965) and Skinner (1959). Yawkey and Miller (1983) summarize those positions prior to the 1960s by noting that the behaviorist, maturationist, and nativist perspectives made little to no mention of the role of environmental content in acquiring (or using) pretend play and language.

Arising in the mid-1960's, the constructivist perspective stresses that pretend play and language develop and can best be studied in social interactional settings (Fein, 1981; Piaget, 1962). The constructivist position emphasizes the experiential history of the child which is cognitive in origin and development and the supportive environment in which play and language evolve and can be studied. Pretend play and language become functions of both the child and the social environmental setting; the youngster exerts influences on the environment and in turn becomes influenced by it. From a

constructivist's point of view, "on-going" pretend play in social context is one of the richest settings for studying and aiding children's growth and use of language (Fein, 1981; Nicolich, 1981). From a constructivist perspective, pretend play is defined as the cognitive capacities of youngsters to use "as if" thought structures (Sarbin, 1966) to transform themselves into other people, objects or situations as observed in their motor and/or verbal actions (Curry & Arnaud, 1974). The relationships between children's play and growth and use of language in social context receive support from and can be viewed on a number of levels: (a) theoretical connectives, (b) results of research studies and, (c) pretend play actions.

Relationships Between Pretend Play and Language

The relations between children's pretend play and language rest with constructivist principles drawn from Piaget's theory of cognitive development, results of research studies and delineation of pretend play actions.

Theoretical Connectives

Pretend play and its potential language growth of young children is virtually an untapped reservoir for study (Caplan & Caplan, 1973; Neuman, 1971). Researchers such as Freyberg (1973), Nicolich (1975), Pederson and Wender (1968), Pellegrini (1981), Pulaski (1973), Yawkey (1981) and Silvern, Williamson and Waters (1983) are suggesting that pretend play provides the opportunity for cognitive and language development. The assumption of a connection between pretend play and language rest, historically on the theoretical ideas of Bruner (1972), Vygotsy (1967) and Piaget (19962) which show that pretend play is related to and a necessary ingredient of cognitive development. The development of pretend play, like thinking evolves from birth and continues across the life span (Piaget, 1962).

Pretend play develops around age two with the onset of language and continues to ages 11 or 12 with rule-governed play increasing in importance. The core component

between pretend play and language is representational thought - i.e., the cognitive capacity to construct mental elements that stand for raw perceptions and actions and the capacity to manipulate these elements according to coherent and fundamental logical principles (Fein; 1978, Piaget, 1962). Theoreticians such as Fein (1978) and Nicolich (1975) have explained the relation of mental representation to pretend play and language in a number of ways. First, youngsters identify, define, and assign roles in their pretend which require motor actions. These motor actions provide feedback in social content and link motor, cognitive and verbal elements to reality (Bruner, 1972; Piaget, 1962). This motor feedback becomes an integral part of learning concepts and may even symbolize them (Saltz, Dixon & Johnson, 1977).

Using motor actions in pretend play, the youngster becomes the chief actor, observer, and participator. In thematic episodes, such as "Visiting the Post Office," "Playing Dinosaurs"-- or "Nighttime," the youngsters observe and use motor actions and express their ideas. The relationships between pretend play, thought and verbal and nonverbal communication rest on motor actions and are the key to mental representation.

Second, the youngsters in pretend play are immersed in a sea of words and roles which relate their social behaviors to their activities. Through these imaginative roles youngsters imitate and create novel actions from those that they have observed in the adult world. Watching what teachers, parents and other significant adults and peers do and say, children use and practice routines, patterns and social language. Gaining mastery over the world of social ideas, pretend play utilizes the child's experiences, knowledge, and vocabulary that enables him to develop and expand his own role. In addition, children learn to use, and express empathy, sharing, helping, and other abilities underlying social competence. Showing empathy, caring, helping and aggression in socially accepted ways, youngsters through pretend play begin to understand the relationship between "feelings" and "actions." As youngsters continue

role development and and role changes, the patterns and routines of their responses to individuals and events would also change (Yawkey, 1983; Saltz et al., 1977). As a result of role development and role changes, more complex patterns and routines of responding evolve -- relative to the role and context.

The third link between pretend play and language through mental representation is creative expression (Smilansky, 1968). Pretend play helps children to create novel statements and actions. Many of these novel statements and actions have no known models or direct antecedents (Piaget, 1962). Creative expression emerges from the demands of the dialogue and situation in pretend play. Relying on and generalizing from an experiential base, children develop and practice creative expression. The gap between the experiential base and the demands of the role is filled by novel statements, actions, and activities. For instance, when Margaret and Beatrice use blocks "as if" they are wild horses and pretend with them, they are relying on their creative thoughts and expressions to bridge this gap between experience and role demands.

The fourth link between pretend play and language is concentration (Smilansky, 1968). This link focuses on the youngster's attention to objects, situations, people, and actions used in pretend play. Pretend play strengthens concentration as youngster's communicate and demonstrate their enactments. The actors must focus and concentrate in order to pick up on one another's cues and prompts emitted in the play episode. They pick up on and extend each other's actions. And, their powers of concentration and attention increase.

Related to the fourth is the fifth link, decentering. Pretend play fosters decentering. Decentering is the ability to perceive, understand and consider simultaneously the varied or multiple aspects of objects, events and situations (Fenson & Ramsay, 1980). Through pretend play, youngsters shift their conceptual schemata between symbolically transformed and immediately present stimuli. This conceptual shifting of cognitive schemata provides distance from or a break between stimuli in the

environment and is the foundation for mental representation and cognitive operativity (Piaget, 1971; 1962).

The links between imagining, thinking, and communicating not only underlie but also stress the importance of pretend play used as a vehicle for developing language and cognitive learning. By working with young children in school and home settings in pretend play, their abilities in using and practicing communication, and creative expression develop and increase. Accordingly, pretend play in dramatic and sociodramatic forms is a potent tool for working with youngsters in school and home settings. Sociodramatic and dramatic play, as forms of imaginative activities are natural and spontaneous. Coupled with adult guidance, then are useful for fostering language and cognitive learning in young children.

Dramatic and sociodramatic play are easily differentiated from one another. Both are forms of pretend or imaginative play. In dramatic and sociodramatic play, the child takes on a role of another person, object, or situation, and pretends to be the "other." In both dramatic and sociodramatic play, the youngster initiates, models and creates actions and expressions in that role with the help of play objects. In dramatic play, however, the child does the imitating, modeling and creating by himself and without other individuals involved in the imaginative episode. Solitary play is a form of dramatic play where two children are sitting and playing side by side. When their play episodes are independent of one another and if they communicate, the interactions between these youngsters are at low levels. They do not meaningfully pick up on each other's cues and prompts and essentially their entire dialogue or parts of it are unrelated to the ongoing episode. In sociodramatic play, two or more children act as a social group. They interact with one another in a meaningful way and act and react to and pick up on one another's prompts. The theme of the episode becomes a unitary one that develops and evolves betwen players. Their play becomes more elaborated and detailed and the members, in this form of pretend play, cooperate in a meaningful way.

In sociodramatic play, there is easily recognizable beginning, mid and ending points. There is also mutual planning among group members.

With the focus of sociodramatic play on social collaboration or involvement between individuals, the youngsters begin to see their relationships to others as reciprocal rather than unindimensional. Here, youngsters see themselves and the environment around them from other perspectives. Piaget (1962) feels that the reciprocal quality of sociodramatic play enables youngsters to coordinate internal relationships derived from being able to view situations, actions, and people from differing perspectives. The more the youngsters become involved in sociodramatic play, the more they re-order, re-orient, and re-adjust, their mental models of their physical and social worlds. With the social collaborative aspects of sociodramatic play, the youngster re-orders his mental models of his environments more in line with the conceptual nature and use of verbal and nonverbal language. In addition, this quality of social collaborative in sociodramatic play permits the development of perspective taking (Burns & Brainerd, 1979). Meaningful social interaction in sociodramatic play requires the ability to see relationships between others as reciprocal.

The five connectives described above provide a rationale for mental representation which links together pretend play and language. Based on the connectives, the results of selected research studies show the significance of pretend play and language and indicate that pretend play may aid the growth and learning of expression-both oral and written.

Selected Research Studies

The results of selected research studies, such as, Smilansky (1968), Saltz and Johnson (1974), Saltz, Dixon and Johnson (1977), Silvern, Williamson and Waters (1983) and Yawkey (1981; 1983) define further the relation between pretend play in dramatic and sociodramatic forms and show the significance of pretend play in aiding language, communication and cognitive growth in young children.

Smilansky (1968) compared the effects of sociodramatic play of 140 children, ages three to six, from low, middle and high income populations on language abilities in young children. In this classic study, Smilansky using adult tutors, trained children from low socioeconomic populations on sociodramatic play behaviors reflective of youngsters from higher income populations. After 67 hours of training, the results indicated that children from lower income populations improved in pretend play and language behaviors characteristic of youngsters from higher income levels. In particular, these children showed significant increases in mean frequencies of words used in sentences, contextural words and nonrepeated words as compared to baseline language samples recorded prior to training.

In a similar way, Saltz and Johnson (1974) and Saltz, Dixon and Johnson (1977) explored the effects of group sociodramatic (i.e., enacting previous real experiences) and fantasy play (i.e., role-playing fairy tales) and control treatments. Over a successive three year training period, the effects of group pretend play were observed on preschool children's cognitive and language abilities and impulse control. The consistent results show that training in fantasy play using adult tutors lead to increases in intellectual performances as measured by standard IQ tests for children scoring above 80 IQ prior to training, in cognitive abilities to distinguish reality from fantasy on the Taylor pictorial test, in delaying impulsive behavior and in showing empathy with others. These effects of group fantasy play were superior to those of sociodramatic play as well as the control treatments across the three years.

Silvern, Williamson and Waters (1983) examined the effects of sociodramatic play (and other conditions) as mediators of listening comprehension. Randomly assigning five year old children to one of five groups (i.e., control, play, puppet, picture and repetition-control), they were read stories and given particular procedures specific to their condition. They were individually assessed on listening comprehensin tasks. The results showed that the picture condition produced the highest absolute scores.

However, sociodramatic play condition yielded the greatest growth in listening comprehension.

Yawkey (1981) explored the use of sociodramatic play on reading readiness behaviors and adult ratings of playfulness in five year old children. Playfulness is defined as the cognitive use of familiar play objects, and ideas in nonstandard or divergent ways (Lieberman, 1977; 1965). Rather than focusing on sociodramatic play, this study examined dramatic play. The dramatic play in the experimental group and the free-play activities in the control group lasted 15 minutes per day across seven consecutive months of the school year. The youngsters were administered pre and post tests of reading readiness and were scored for playfulness in pre and post sessions. The results shows that children in dramatic play groups performed significantly better than those in control groups in both reading-readiness and adult-observed playfulness capacitites. And, the children who had the lowest pre-test scores in reading readiness received the most benefit from adult-guided dramatic play episodes.

Finally, Yawkey (1983) examined sociodramatic play effects and gender differences on five year old children's mathematical, reading-readiness, imaginative and adult-rated playfulness abilities. The children in the sociodramatic defined, assigned and carried out roles dealing with common experiences such as: (a) "Feeding the Animals" based on field-trips to the zoo and, (b) "Going Shopping" derived from visits to shopping malls and supermarkets. In the sociodramatic groups, each of the episodes were experienced first by the children before they enacted them through group play. In the comparison condition, children in small groups of four and five colored-in drawings, made sketches of objects, pasted pictures on construction paper and fingerpainted. Pre and post tests were administered in mathematics, reading-readiness and imaginative abilities; for playfulness abilities the youngsters were observed and rated by adults in pre and post sessions. The results showed that sociodramatic play (relative to comparison treatments) aided significantly the five year old's performance in

mathematics, reading readiness, imaginativeness and playfulness. Girls yielded significantly higher scores than boys on reading readiness and imaginativeness. Finally, girls in the sociodramatic play group yielded significantly more imaginative actions than boys in the comparison group.

The results of these selected research studies show that pretend play in individual and group settings can aid young children's growth of language and communication-related capacities. The results of these studies focusing on pretend play and language are in agreement with those of Feitelson and Ross (1973) reporting increases for originality, Smith and Syddall (1978) reporting increases for group cooperation and Burns and Brainerd (1979) for cognitive perspective-taking with pretend play turoting.

Pretend Play Actions

The results of research studies of Smilansky (1968), Saltz, Dixon and Johnson (1977), Silvern, Williamson and Waters (1983), Yawkey (1983) and others support relationships between pretend play and language growth and attempt to support the potential of pretend play for aiding forms of expression--both oral and written. Although the connections between pretend play and language rest on mental representations which have already been described, the selected studies provide further insight into pretend play actions used for language development. These pretend play actions develop and nurture mental representations that occur in the make-believe enactments. Across dramatic, fantasy and sociodramatic enactments, these selected studies identify several differing types of pretend play actions:

(a) make-believe in regard to objects describe motor movements and verbal statements which are substituted for toys and instructured materials

(b) make-believe with actions and situtations describe when verbal descriptions which become substitutes for actions and situations

(c) imitative role play is where youngsters undertake make-believe roles and express them in imitative actions and/or verbal statements

(d) interaction and verbal communication describe at least two youngsters interacting in imaginative play

(e) role play is when youngsters remain with a single role or related incident for a period of time

Each of the pretend play actions is described in the following paragraphs.

Make Believe With Objects. This pretend action defines the various types of play objects found in the environment and used in play encounters. The four categories of toys listed in ascending order of complexity and abstraction are: (a) real objects, (b) toys, (c) instructional materials and, (d) constructional tangibles (Yawkey, 1981). Briefly, real objects have a special identity and particular purpose for use in the environment. Real objects include household furniture and utensils, sand, water, food, clothing and others. Second, toy objects are actual miniature replicas or reproductions of real objects. Though scaled down in size, toys retain the same identity and function of their full-sized and real counterparts. Examples of toys are trucks, cars, baby carriages, model airplanes and many others. Third, instructional materials are objects which are specifically designed to teach concepts, skills or relationships and sequencing skills of largest to smallest and smallest to largest. Materials found in Montessori schools are this type and variety. Fourth, constructional materials have no specific identity or function. They are useful in building and making other objects. Examples of these multipurpose materials are blocks, art and other constructional objects. These four types of play objects are extremely important for they essentially set the scope and content for the youngster's play episodes.

Make-Believe With Actions and Situations. The actions subcomponent identifies the things children can make or perform in the play settings. As such, there are four main types of pretend actions which may be observed during the imaginative play episode. These actions, identified in ascending order of complexity and abstraction are: (a) explorative, (b) repetitive, (c) replicative and, (d) transformtive (Neumann, 1971).

They can be physical movements of the body or they may be mental thought in operation.

Explorative actions are the most concrete operations the child experiences. These actions show random investigation by manipulating and grasping. For example, a child handles a new toy in many possible ways. Through this process, the youngster categorizes the new information from the toy into his experiential background. The repetitive actions substantiate the gathered information by repeated testing. For example, the child manipulates a new toy for a period of time. By manipulating, the youngster is then able to conclude that the toy is much like other toys he has played with in the bath tub. Because of these similarities and functions, the youngster identifies it as a toy boat. Replicative actions are actions used to simulate reality by reconstructing it. Here, the child identifies and uses the object in such a way that it corresponds to its identity and function in reality. For example, the child, concludes that the new toy is a boat. He pushes it in the water, makes huge waves in the bath tub and sinks it. Transformative actions extend the skills and information learned by the child through symbolic or creative uses of objects, subjects, or the self (Neumann, 1971). During this action, the child may change the toy boat into a race car. He in turn, moves it along the kitchen floor. The youngster may use a soup box obtained from the supermarket "as if" it is a "horse" and may pretend that he is riding it through the forest covered valley.

The situations subcomponent identifies the type of pretend play observed during the episde. The play forms are dramatic or sociodramatic and were described earlier and in detail in this chapter. Briefly, however, the youngster in dramatic play takes on the role of and pretends to be another person. The role-taking of that other person includes imitation with the additinal use of real or imagined objects and subjects. The child's talk and expressions during play serve as substitutes in the pretend play sequence. For example, the child, pretending to be a fireman putting out a fire

imitates the movements of: (a) riding on the back of the fire truck, (b) jumping off and aiming the hose toward the burning building and, (c) pulling the lever on the nozzle to let the water spray out. The child expands the play by wearing a real or imagined fire hat and coat. Verbal statements also enhance the imitation as the child talks like a fireman. He may exclaim, "That fire is really blazing!" and "I must save the mother!" Briefly, and in sociodramatic play, there is more than one child involved and both elaborate on the theme in a cooperative manner. The youngsters, in turn, interact with each other using motor movements and verbal statements. Unlike the egocentric imitation and verbalization of dramatic play, the imitation and verbalization are much richer and more developed and elaborate. They begin to imitate adult talk as well as substitute speech for objects, actions, and situations. Speech serves an additional function in sociodramatic play. Planning by defining, assigning, and elaborating roles is done cooperatively before and during the play episode. For example, several children join the child who is pretending to be a fireman. They decide that one child should drive the truck, another should hold on to the hook and ladder, and a third should ride on the back of the truck. When the children reach the fire, they change plans a bit when a youngster says, "We don't need two people to pull the hose! You go and hook up the other end of the hose to the fire hydrant. We can use the chair as the fire hydrant." Sociodramatic and dramatic play provides opportunities to interrelate both situations and actions.

Imitative Role-Play. The youngster tries-on a pretend role individually or in groups and makes statements to indicate that role. In this instance, the change or transformation through forms of play shows that the players are different persons or objects other than themselves. Through verbal statements and/or motor movements the children demonstrate their imitative role-play. The youngster may imitate Superman. On, in a group situation, the children define roles in modeling: "I am Aunt Veronica, you be Uncle Joe, and the doll is our baby!" With motoric movements, the child may

show that he is using a ruler "as if" it is an ax by making chopping movements with it. Youngsters may make motoric movements to pantomime the walking actions of several animals in their portrayal of the imaginative episode, "At the Zoo!" By using these movements and verbalizations, children show imitations of people, objects or situations that are being role played. They show the adult that the child is undertaking an imitative role play. From the observation, the role or roles the child is assuming can be identified in that imaginative play episode.

Interaction and Verbal Communication. Referring to a group setting of at least two (or more) players, interaction and verbal communication form the framework of the play episode. Since this pretend play action requires two or more people, the children are engaged in sociodramatic play. Here, verbal interactions related to the episode and themes transpire. Through this verbal interaction and communication, the planning, development and follow-through of the children in pretend play can be observed.

Role-Play. Role-play differs from the role-taking. Role-taking as described by Shantz (1975) refers to a group of cognitive processes necessary to take the perspective of another person. As defined by Mead (1934), role-playing involves putting oneself in the place of another, understanding another's role attributes, thoughts, and feelings. Role-taking is central to role-playing and pretend-play. Role-taking refers to covert cognitive actions used in assuming the perspective of another. Role-playing is actually taking on role attributes of another and acting overtly as the role demands. In role-play, children show symbolic elaboration of the role by the way they choose to show their conception of it. Highly correlated with cognitive development, it reflects children's intellectual growth through their perceptions of the roles and modes of enacting them. In role play, the youngsters also integrate emotion and thought. This integration proceeds from showing emotional and social behavior to increasing use of words and symbolic representation. Finally, the child must be able to hold and show his role for a period of time. This element of role play provides the youngster with the opportunity of assimilating and practicing the role.

In summary, the relationship between pretend play and language shows not only that they have a similar cognitive base and several common theoretical connectives but also that pretend play can aid language growth as shown by the results of selected research studies. In addition, these selected research studies describe and show the specific types and kinds of pretend play actions that are basic to make-believe enactments.

Developing Language Through Sociodramatic Play in Center and Classroom Programs for Young Children

It is apparent through results of research studies (e.g., Saltz et al., 1977) and the theoretical connectives between pretend play and cognition and language developed by Piaget (1962) and Vygotsky (1967) that individual and group forms of play can aid the growth of communication--both oral and written. In the research studies of Yawkey (1983) and Yawkey and Yawkey (1983), an instructional model was developed and tested. It uses sociodramatic play for language growth. Also, the instructional model takes into consideration the pretend play actions of make-believe with regard to objects, situations, and actions, imitative role play, interaction and communication and role playing. The instructional model using sociodramatic play for language growth is composed of two components: observation and language (Yawkey & Yawkey, 1983; Yawkey & Blohm, 1977). For young children, ages 2/3 to 5, the observation component only should be used. For older children 6 to 8 who are ready cognitively for rather specific reading and language instruction, the observation and language components of this instructional model can be used. Each component is described in the following sections.

Observation Component

The observation component of the instructional model furnishes the "grist" for language growth. The key elements or guidelines of the observation component are

observing the children's sociodramatic experiences, interviewing them, and transcribing the interview. Explanations for using each of these guidelines follow.

For the first guideline called "observing" the adult observes the children carefully in their sociodramatic play. Notes can be made in written or mental form. In a role-play context, the types of pretend play actions used by the children are noted: (a) make-believe in regard to objects, (b) make-believe in regard to situations and actions, (c) imitative role play and, (d) interaction and verbal communication. Watching for and noting each of these pretend actions prepares the adult to guide the youngsters through interviewing and transcribing phases.

For example in observing for the pretend action, imitative role play, children change their personal identities. These changes are seen in the youngster's use of verbal declarations and motor movements. Some examples of imitative role play are: "I am the Daddy! You will be the Mommy! The doll is our baby!" Observing for make-believe in regard to objects focuses on substituting verbal statements and body movements for real objects. In the substitution process, the basic natural identity of real objects change. And, these changes are observed in verbal declarations, actions, or movements made by the child. For instance, a four year old says, "I am sawing a log". Neither the saw nor log are present and hand and arm movements are substitutes for these objects. The child's hand and its movements in this example magically change into a saw and saw movements. Watching for make-believe in regard to actions and situations shows whether or not verbal descriptions become substitutes for actions and situations. In substituting actions, for example, a kindergarten or primary grade child may say, "Let's pretend I have already returned from work. I cooked the food. Now, I am setting the table." Here, the first two statements made by the child are substitutes for actions and only the last action, "setting the table" is actually completed. In substituting situations, for instance, the child may say, "Let's pretend that this is a hopsital and children are recovering from their illnesses." The substitute situations in

these examples are the nurse for the doctor and the children in the hospital. In observing for interaction and verbal communication, the youngsters define, assign, and carry out roles and provide verbal and nonverbal cues to one another in their sociodramatic play. For example, children say, "Let's play 'Visiting the Supermarket'! I will be the clerk, you will play the customer. Let me play the child!" This communication serves as prompts to initiate (and others to end) the sociodramatic play. By carefully watching the children in their sociodramatic play, the types of pretend actions form the basis for the remaining two guidelines in this component.

The second guideline in the observation component of this instructional model is "interviewing!" After the episode, children are encouraged to tell what they said and what actions and movements they made. This procedure enhances language growth and at that same time aides memory. Throughout the interview, how well the child uses logical sequencing and coherency should be noted. Sequencing and coherency are fundamental characteristics of pretend play, and vital skills in language growth. Examples of sequencing are occurrences in the play episode with event following event following event. Coherency means the understandings of the play episode as beginning, mid-point, and ending.

The final guideline in the observation component is "transcribing." As the children describe the play episode, their statements are written on a large lined sheet of paper or chalkboard. The sentences are printed in large legible form and written exactly as the children dictate them. Special care is taken to insure that every child who participates in the pretend play provides at least one sentence for dictation. The young child ages 2/3 to 5, sees that oral disclosure can be written and symbolized and associates sounds with their print-symbol forms. The completed transcription can be read by the adult as desired by the children. As the transcription is completed for the older child, 6 to 8, the second component of this instructional model begins. This component focuses on language development.

Language Development Component

In this component, the real language, actual vocabulary, and speech patterns of the children generated in pretend play are used for developing beginning reading. The key elements or guidelines of this component are reading, reviewing and retyping the transcript for permanency. Explanations for each of the guidelines follow.

After completing the transcribing, the "reading" guideline is used. The episode is read aloud to the children -- in a group setting -- to help them again understand main ideas and subsequent details (Yawkey & Blohm, 1977). The children see that the sentences they "said" can be read. The adult slides a marker (e.g., hand or index card) under each word or phrase in the story as it is read. Pausing after each word and phrase, facilitates sentence patterns, intontion, structure words, and changes in word form (Yawkey & Blohm, 1977). Left to right patterning and return sweep of the eyes from line to line is reinforced. Children also note capital and lower case letters.

Next, the children read the episode together. Mispronounced words are corrected and omissions are supplied on an as-needed-only basis. Oral reading fluency is enhanced by this initial group reading. In addition, group strengths and weaknesses are diagnosed informally and skill development activities are provided in an incidental fashion. The key is "incidental" since skills are only introduced where appropriate and needed. For example, visual discrimination of shapes, letters, and words, understandings of word families, rhyming, inflectional endings, literal and inferential comprehension and other concepts may be taught to the whole group or an individual child as an on-going part of language. Follow-up group activities, such as coloring, writing, and cutting letter shapes help to reinforce learning and skill development. At the end of the group reading session, each child identifies words in the story which he recognizes without help. They are printed on cards and become the child's "known words." They are used as needed for individual review.

The next guideline is "reviewing." The episode is reviewed individually with the child. For example, words are selected from the child's "known word" list and word

recognition is checked. The child then can practice the episode by himself and develop oral fluency Yawkey & Yawkey, 1983). As opportunities present themselves, the skills and concepts are practiced (e.g., beginning and ending sounds, vowels, digraphs, accents, syllabication, comprehension, and others). As another individual follow-up activity, the child builds new sentences out of the word cards drawn from the episode.

The final guideline is "retyping." The transcription of the sociodramatic play is typed and mimeographed. Each child in the group is given a copy of the episode. These copies may be circulated among other children so that they may read each other's episodes. Copies of the transcribed episode can be given to the child's parents and placed on a bulletin board for display. With the completion of the language development component, other sociodramatic episodes can be used in the same fashion to begin and develop language growth in young children.

Summary and Conclusion

From a constructivist perspective, pretend play and language growth are related through representational thought--i.e., the intellectual capacity to construct mental elements that stand for raw perceptions and actions and the capacity to manipulate these elements according to coherent and logical principles. Fundamental to representational thought are five connectives at the theoretical level which link together pretend play and language growth: motor actions, roles and role changes, creative expression, concentration and decentration. At the research level, results of selected studies (e.g., Saltz et al., 1977; Smilansky, 1968) show not only that pretend play and language growth are associated but also that pretend play in dramatic and sociodramatic form can assist communication--both oral and written. Finally the pretend play actions crucial to sociodramatic play and growth in language are: make-believe with objects, situations and actions role play, imitative role play and interaction and verbal communication.

Supported at theoretical and research levels, an instructional model that uses sociodramatic play for growth of language was developed and explained. It contains two major components--observation and language development. The former component is used with young children age 2/3 to 5 and both components can be employed with youngsters 6 to 8 who are ready for more formal language instruction. The observation component contains three guidelines: observing, interviewing and transcribing. For the language development component, the elements are reading, reviewing, and retyping.

There are several benefits of this instructional model. First, it provides a practical model that can be easily used in center and classroom programs. Second, the model provides guidelines for observing the youngsters in sociodramatic play and working with them for language growth. Third this model uses natural real-life experiences that originate with the children for learning rather than experiences contributed by the adult. Fourth, the model harnesses the characteristics of sequence (i.e., one event following another in sequential order) and coherence (i.e., the elements of the episode forming a logical whole with story beginnings, the body, and the ending). These characteristics are fundamental to sociodramatic play and language episodes. Finally, this instructional model employs group settings for language development.

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